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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

11 January 1949

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 118

SUBJECT: Probable Soviet Reaction to a US Attempt to Force
the Berlin Blockade.

Whatever might have been the Soviet reaction had the US attempted to force the Berlin blockade when it was first imposed, such a US attempt under present circumstances would involve substantial risk of a general war.

It is probable that, faced with such a challenge at this stage the Kremlin would seek to maintain the blockade of Berlin at all costs including, if necessary, war with the Western Powers. Such a Soviet decision would be based on the following considerations:

a. the Berlin blockade has achieved such significance that its abandonment by the USSR, in the face of a Western threat, would constitute for the Kremlin a disastrous loss in terms of prestige and initiative.

b. a Soviet retreat on the blockade issue would vastly encourage resistance to Soviet aggression in the West and to Communist domination throughout the Soviet orbit.

While the USSR thus appears willing to accept war if necessary, it will nevertheless first exhaust all means short of armed force, such as sabotage, demolition, and obstruction, to maintain the blockade.

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NO CHANGE in Class.

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